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the Mandal makes up outstanding debts as far as he can out of his own property.

If through misfortune or poverty a man falls behind with his taxes the Mandal will advise him to collect materials for a feast. At this feast, called *hloang-ʒok*, the guests will contribute presents of money according to their ability, the money contributed being considered as an absolute gift, and not as a loan. In the last three years three people have thus been cleared of debt by voluntary contributions.

Actual crime takes up very little time. The only generally authenticated murder in the neighbourhood took place two centuries ago; but there are fairly constant rumours and suspicions of poisoning, and at least one instance of suspected foul play[7] which have to be cleared up.

In Lingthem an old widowed nun, Hlatam, the mother of Aga, is generally believed to possess a mysterious slow-acting 'poison,' which either she, or one of her ancestors, is said to have obtained from the Plains people. So strong was this suspicion that twenty years ago the Mandal had her seized while she was working in the fields; she was brought to the monastery where she was given a complete body search by some women, while the *youmi* and *gyapŏn* ransacked her house: no trace of any poison was found, and after the accusation she prayed in the monastery, calling on the Gods to kill her if she possessed any poison.

Nevertheless the majority of the people of Lingthem still believe that she possesses poison. Chala Mandal says it is both a folly and a sin to call her a poisoner; there is no evidence of her murderous activities, there would be no advantage in her pursuing them and anyhow, where could she obtain the poison? Jiroong and one or two others agree with the Mandal, but the great majority take up the attitude that there is no smoke without fire, and some implicitly believe in her poisoning and are too frightened to take food or drink from her hands. Thus the lama Tafoor says that when he has to go to her house for a ceremony he makes it quite clear that he has come as a priest, and tells her that if he is ill subsequently everybody will know who to blame. Kurma believed that his second wife and her father were both killed by Hlatam; both died of stomach trouble which started almost immediately after receiving food from her, though death did not ensue till some months later.

This poison is considered to have partially natural and partially

[7] See Book Three. Chapter Fifteen pp. 402–403.

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754 supernatural qualities. The poison is meant to be a solid substance, but it does not act unless Hlatam has evil intentions towards the person to whom she gives it. Neither poison nor ill-will are sufficient by themselves; the combination of the two is necessary. The possession of this poison carries certain disadvantages; it cannot be got rid of, for then the supernatural attached to it would destroy the person who threw it away; and it is also necessary to employ it once ever so often or the supernatural will attack the possessor; if no external enemy is the victim it must be given to somebody in the owner's household.

Those who believe in the poison think that before she dies Hlatam will give the poison to her son Aga. If he were to proclaim her guilt during her life-time, people might trust him after her death; if however he says nothing they will fear him, even though he go through the gesture of throwing the poison into the water. Aga is almost the nastiest person in Lingthem; he has a squint and a sullen and leering expression, and is one of the few people on whom Lepchas are willing to pronounce moral judgements; two said of him vehemently that he was evil-minded. I considered him below average intelligence and somewhat malicious; it is possible that the universal fear and suspicion of his mother has rendered him surly and malevolent. Hlatam herself seemed a cheerful and rather bawdy-minded old lady, ever ready to joke; outside her own house people did not distinguish her in any way, but the majority said they were frightened to visit her and would not take food from her hands unless she tasted it first.

754 152 I personally do not believe in Hlatam's 'poisoning'; it reminds me of the accusation of Mary Baker Eddy that her third husband was killed by 'arsenical poison mentally administered'.[8] At the same time it has seemed worth while to treat the subject fully for it is almost the only instance of suspected (and possibly repressed and transferred) aggression among the Lepchas. As will be seen later, all misfortunes, whatever their nature, are generally ascribed to the action of supernaturals, and even personal aggression is usually represented as being outside the aggressor's control. Hlatam has been converted into a sort of scape-goat; among Lepchas even motivated aggression is socially disapproved of; Hlatam is believed to exercise almost motiveless malevolence. In general theory her 'poison' is said to be useful for acquiring property and securing revenge; but in the case of her actual named victims there was no

[8] See *Mrs. Eddy* by E. F. Dakin. (London Scribner's 1929.) pp. 166–168, 227.

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property gain and no feud; at most somebody in the victim's family had at some time said something derogatory about Hlatam. Quarrelling is socially so strongly disapproved of that people of naturally aggressive temperament probably suffer from considerable psychological discomfort and get some relief from the thought of unrestrained aggression practised by somebody else. I have statements by nine people about Hlatam and her poison, for the subject was rather an uncomfortable one and could only be broached to people I knew well; the three most emphatic about her guilt were potentially aggressive in other ways; those who protested her innocence were themselves gentle. The motive of poison obtained from strangers—plainsmen or Nepali or Tibetans—crops up fairly often in anecdote and legend; but I never heard of the strong aconite arrow-poison, which nearly every man possesses, being employed for illegitimate purposes, though when men commit suicide they usually do so by taking it.

Theft is unusual; it practically never occurs from houses, which, if there is nobody at home, are usually padlocked; but this padlock is in point of fact more a social sign that the house is momentarily unoccupied, than a protection against possible entry. Sometimes indeed the padlock is fastened on to a thin loop of bamboo fibre which could be torn to pieces in the hand; and it would never be difficult to make an entry into a Lepcha house through the bamboo floor or walls. A few cases occurred about four years ago of cardamum fruit being stolen off the plants in the field, but there have been no instances of this in the last three years. If a theft is witnessed the robbed person goes and informs the Mandal who then consults with the *youmi*; then the Mandal and *youmi* go to the thief and try their utmost to persuade him to restore the stolen property; if he does so he is given a severe talking to and the incident is considered closed. Should he refuse, however, and should there be clear evidence against him, the matter would be reported to Gangtok; such a course is to be deplored and in fact has not occurred within recent years. If a child commits a theft the father has to insist on restitution and to give the child a severe beating as punishment.

To take even the smallest quantities of fruit or grain from other people's gardens or fields without obtaining permission is regarded as theft, and people would be ashamed of acting in this way, however hungry they might feel. A child who picked a fruit off a neighbour's tree would be severely punished.

There is no supernatural protection against thieves in the house

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685 or fields, though there is a feeling (not very strong) that *Thyak-dum*[9] will protect the houses to which he is attached. Lepcha economy is founded on the supposition that people do not steal and that no precautions are necessary against theft; consequently when thefts do occur they are particularly disquieting. There is no social apparatus for discovering the unwitnessed thief, or for forcing a confession; in such cases recourse may be had to supernatural powers, in the form of malicious sorcery. Malicious sorcery can in theory be directed against a personal enemy, but all the instances that I heard of were directed against unknown thieves.

754 756 793 Both lamas and Mun have traditions of malicious sorcery, of getting devils to plague a man or devour his soul; but Mun are considered to be less expert in the matter, taking a month while a lama should only take three days. The Mun are said to work by feeding a particular devil until it is contented and grateful, whereupon it will do whatever is asked. Lamas have two methods; the most learned can summon the victim's soul in the form of an insect and destroy it ritually, whereupon the victim dies at once, or they can summon a devil and hand over the victim to him. To kill a particular person by sorcery it is necessary to have some of their 'dirt'[10]—that is hair clippings, finger nails, or clothes that have been long worn; in the case of an unknown thief a portion of the stolen object, or of some other object which had been in long association with it is desirable, though not essential.

To kill the soul of a person an altar should be erected in the home in front of which is placed a plate covered with rice flour or very fine ashes; around this is arranged a fence of twelve pieces of wood inscribed with the victim's name arranged in pairs meeting at the top; inside the fence is the man's 'dirt' wrapped up in a piece of paper inscribed with his name. The lama then waves a stick with a piece of cloth on it and summons the victim's soul, which will presently arrive in the form of some winged insect; if the man is innocent the insect will not pass the fence but will go straight to the altar and worship there; if it settles on the plate it can be killed, whereupon the victim will immediately die.

To give a person over to a devil the proceeding is somewhat different. The victim's dirt is wrapped up in a piece of paper which

[9] See Chapter Two, pp. 74–75.

[10] The collective noun, used by Lepchas to indicate the exuviae, the portions of a victim's body or clothing which can be used for malicious sorcery, is *mari*, which means literally 'body dirt.'

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754 793 has been smeared with blood and arrow-poison, and inscribed with the victim's name and a spell written in Tibetan characters (the spell itself is believed to be in Burmese). This is put into a bamboo *patyoot* and is then offered to a man-eating devil, together with *cherkem*, consisting of grain floating in *chi* and blood, and other offerings. When the sorcerer is apprised of the arrival of the devil, either by a dream or by seeing him in reality he says to it 'So and so is my enemy, and I give his flesh to you to eat'; after that the bamboo is buried near one of the devil's houses. To make a person ill a quite simple ceremony is performed inside the monastery.

Tafoor, who told me about these rituals, is one of the three lamas of the neighbourhood who know how to perform them; the other two are the two Dorjé Lapoon, who received the knowledge from learned Tibetan lamas. Tafoor has never practised himself, and is not sure if the first Dorjé Lapoon ever did, but his uncle, the second Dorjé Lapoon, who taught him, has killed two people by sorcery. The first was when he was a student; a man came to his teacher and asked him to sorcerise somebody for him, and the teacher told his pupil to try his hand. The second instance was many years later, when his knife was stolen at a monastery feast; the thief, though he did not know it at the time, was one of the second Dorjé Lapoon's young pupils; the pupil did not know that the sorcery had been started against him or he could have averted it by returning the knife; only after his death, three months later, was his identity known and the lost knife recovered.

Nowadays the second Dorjé Lapoon refuses to perform sorcery any longer. The Maharajah has issued stringent orders forbidding the practice, and he himself, when on pilgrimage to Kathmandhu, made a vow not to indulge further in such wicked acts. Some time ago both Tafoor and Takneum *youmi* had cardamum fruit stolen and asked the second Dorjé Lapoon to sorcerise the thieves; but he replied that it was wicked to kill a man and that thieves should be dealt with by the police. According to lamaist ethics, it is a sin to kill a man by sorcery, but not a grievous sin if the lama afterwards helps his victim's soul to heaven. To kill a man with weapons is a [688] far greater sin; for every person's body is the home of a hundred small gods called Tamba Rigya, and they are destroyed with the body.

About eighteen years ago the husband of Pumri—now the wife of the second Dorjé Lapoon, but at that time his uncle's wife—had a goat stolen; he found some of the stolen meat and brought

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it to the second Dorjé Lapoon and requested him to sorcerise the unknown thieves. Since the aggrieved party was his uncle, he agreed and started the necessary preparations. But while he was making the *cherkem* his elder brother, also a lama, arrived, saw what he was doing, and dissuaded him. Thereupon Pumri's husband took the meat to a Mun who has since died; he performed the sorcery and all the members of the thief's family (it is the family to which Kurma's second wife belonged) died one after the other; eight or nine are now dead and the family is almost extinct.

This is the last recorded case of sorcery being exercised in the district. The tradition is generally known about, and a certain awe of the three lamas who have this special knowledge is felt. But in Zongu there is no fear of one's 'dirt' being taken and used maliciously, and cut hair or nails are let lie where they fall; when they are in foreign parts however Lepchas say that they take care to burn or bury their 'dirt'. The Lepchas have also added an uncanonical rider to the Tibetan tradition of sorcery to the effect that the sorcery when it is directed against a particular person will only hurt that person if he or she is actually guilty; if he is not, the devil will return and destroy the sender. As opposed to the fear of poisoning the fear of sorcery is non-existent, and the subject is practically never mentioned in casual conversation.

Adultery, as will be seen later, is practically never taken any notice of; but if the instance should be particularly flagrant the aggrieved husband has two ways of punishing the lover; he can either beat the lover, thereby shaming him, or he can go and inform the Mandal. If he does this the Mandal will summon a meeting of the elders of the village and will then go to the house of the lover and summon him to confess; if he does so he has to pay to the husband either one chicken and a pig, or Rs. 5/-. If neither lover will confess the matter is abandoned. Discovered adultery is not a cause of enmity either between husband and wife or between husband and lover; only in the case of persistent adultery, and of the woman showing a really marked preference for the lover, would the marriage be broken up.

The only other cause of dispute inside the village is the suspicion of boundary marks to fields having been moved. The only case recorded of this occurred fifteen years ago between an old man, since dead, and the father of Aga; this dispute, however, was patched up without calling in the Mandal, *youmi* and *gyapŏn* who would normally settle such disputes, if the first representations

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are men; of these three were first of all Padem. Kurma is Padem only; he can diagnose but can only perform a few sacrifices and exorcisms.

The other two groups of possessed priests resemble one another and differ from Mun and Padem in so far as neither can make sacrifices nor perform exorcisms, but can merely get possessed by supernaturals; they dance until the supernatural speaks through them and discloses its wants and whereabouts. Both wear special clothes for their performances: the Yaba (women are called Yama) wear bandoliers of tinkling bells and have their clothes fringed with bells; they hold a metal plate and beat it as they dance. Pau (women are called Nandjému) wear elaborate wool head-dresses and dance with a skull-drum in one hand and a bell in the other. Both Yaba and Pau are and have been very rare because the possessing spirits are not Lepcha but have been introduced through inter-marriage with foreign women, the Yaba spirit comes from Limbu women (the Limbu are a Nepali tribe) and the Pau from Sikkimese-Tibetans. There is a tradition that there is a similar spirit called Jhankri belonging to the Chetri,[2] but this spirit has never manifested itself among the Lepchas as there has been no inter-marriage between the two groups.

There is only one representative of this group in Lingthem: the 'elder grandmother' of Patek, an old woman over seventy, is a Nandjému. The service of these diviners is only called in when lama and Mun fail to agree on a diagnosis, or when there is reason to suppose that a new devil has taken up its abode in the neighbourhood. In such cases a Pau or Yaba, usually from another village, will be called in to discover its home and its needs.

It is believed that there are two sorts of Mun, a good group called Tang-li Mun and a bad group called Mun-mook Mun; the difference is similar to the traditional difference between white and black magicians. 'Mun-mook Mun are like thieves: they think and do evil and are possessed by devils which they employ for their own selfish ends; they alone can send devils (the term used for sorcery).' They are believed to have an influence like the evil

Pumri (wife of the second Dorjé Lapoon), the elder wife of Lumba *chithembu* (she is the daughter of Pumri and has the paternal spirit) the 'younger grandmother' of Patek, and the sister of Jiroong (the wife of Kaji). All four women practise.

[2] This Lepcha tradition is incorrect: the Chetri are a fairly pure Hindu tribe; the Jhankri occur among the Gurung.

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eye. On the other hand 'When Tang-li Mun sacrifice they do so with benevolence in their heart towards the people and houses to which they are summoned.' It is thought that none of the Mun now inhabiting Lingthem are evil, though one lived there about a score of years ago; there are however some in other villages. The type of Mun a person becomes depends on his or her teacher, and not on the possessing spirit.

I think the best way of describing the possession and functions of a Mun is to repeat the description of his spiritual life given by Gongyop. For the greater part I was not able to take down his exact words, for he speaks extremely quickly and very easily falls into the sing-song rhythm of a Mun's invocation, often saying the same thing twice or four times in different words, rather after the fashion of the Hebrew psalmist. He uses onomatopoeic words a great deal, many of his own invention. He has a prodigious memory and once started goes on like a clock-work machine; but if he is interrupted his train of thought breaks down and he cannot extract one point out of a sequence for elaboration.

Gongyop is far more in demand than any other Mun in the village; he officiates in nearly all the ceremonies except those which are performed in families of which a member is a Mun. When sacrificing he falls into what is almost a very light trance; his eyes become glazed and unfocussed as he intones his rhythmic chants. He is a man of forty-six, with a rather whimsical and wild-eyed expression and very small and expressive hands. He is easily amused and laughs freely. He is very nervous and jumps perceptibly at any sudden sound, a thing no other Lepcha does; he is aware of his peculiarity and ascribes it to a fall he had from a bamboo when he was thirteen. After that fall blood spurted from his ears and he couldn't see and for a time lay like one dead. Three years later he had another fall, but was not hurt much and climbed the tree again. Nowadays he says he can't climb big trees; if he were to do so he would feel giddy. Even in normal life he suffers from giddiness; 'his eyes turn' and he can't see properly. He can't walk along a cliff; the ground feels as though it were moving up and down, nor can he walk among big trees for he feels that they are going to fall on him. He has frequent unpleasant dreams of falling down or flying down. I did not come across similar nervousness or anxiety among any of the other Lepchas whether Mun or laymen, and such instability is in no way essential for a Mun.

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X 159 My body ached so much that I could not move; I felt as though I were going to burst and all the time as if I was being poked with bones or sticks. Mother tried all the devils to appease them, uselessly; finally she saw that it was the Padem *rum* and she made a sacrifice of fish, bird, *chi*, a scarf and a rupee and a *chimi* and prayed "Nyou *rum*—god of our ancestors—do not harm my son; stay with him and help him and he will serve you." A month later I recovered and now I make sacrifice to the Padem twice a year.'

Birth of bastard sister.

Kurma's bastard sister, Nurzé, was born when he was seven or eight years old. The father was Pashet, but he refused to acknowledge her and his mother's brothers performed the *thip-song* ceremony. The baby was born with a big stomach and died at the age of five owing to the fact that Pashet had blown up a bladder when she was five months gone in the womb. Pot-belly and death is the inevitable *tamtoom* of this—death occuring in the year corresponding to the month of pregnancy at which this act is performed. Kurma thinks Pashet did this on purpose.

Death of Banyok. Kurma's first version.

Banyok was adopted by the Mandal[8] who was, and is, without a son. The Mandal had some distant connections of the Aram Pandjet *pzso* called Kaloo and Tangdong who were jealous of the fact that the Mandal's property would go to the stranger although they had children themselves; therefore according to Kurma they gave Banyok poison in a dish of curds and buckwheat with the result that he died three months later in his mother's home. This poison was bought in the 'plains' in Darjeeling by Kaloo's grandfather; it is still in the possession of a relation, Shupak of Lungdeum.

X 159 ● 754 After the death of the boy there was a general outcry that this woman Tangdong had poisoned him but she protested vehemently against it. However, others persisted in their accusations and eventually a lama came from Talung monastery to make them

[8] Kurma maintained on several occasions that this was proper adoption, but both the Mandal and other people denied that this was so. It is probable that as a pauper the child was brought up in the Mandal's house in exchange for his work in the same way as Satéo is today.

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swear a solemn oath. This ceremony took place down by the river and Salyung of Panung was the sacrificer. An altar was erected and a goat killed and its blood collected into a cup; then the lama summoned by name three devils from Talung and offered them *cherkem*. Tangdong again denied administering the poison, but all the old men present insisted on her guilt. Then the lama touched her forehead with an incense burner and said 'If you have poison may all your *ptso* be destroyed by these demons.' Then a Mun sacrificed, calling on all the devils who were created by Itpomu and dedicated the goat to them and then said to the suspected poisoners 'If you have poison may you die as this goat dies.' Then he sprinkled blood and *chi* on the ground and said 'If you have poison may you and yours dry up as this blood dries up on the ground.' Then he gave them blood and *chi* to drink and said 'If you have poison may you and yours all die of an issue of blood from the nose and mouth.'

Since that date all the members of the *ptso* have died in this way; they have sores and their body is contracted in some sort of paralysis so that they crawl forward and double up and they have an issue of blood from their nose and mouth and then die. The only survivors are two lamas of whom Takal is one, and they perform annually the ceremony to keep off the devils, making an elaborate offering and explaining that they knew nothing of what had occurred at that time and were completely innocent; now that they have heard the story they are making these offerings. (*I did not believe this story at the time as I had already noted Kurma's constant preoccupation with violent death and the story seemed to me, de facto, improbable. I had already heard this story of the perjured poisoners, but as something which had taken place a good number of years ago and in another village. According to Tafoor over thirty years ago at Lungdeum when Tasso Nungyen was Mandal. I was rather unwell when Kurma told me this story and I left him in the middle of the morning; when I saw him about a week later I told him that I had been too unwell to write down what he had told me and asked him to tell me again. The second version is given below and is I think the true one. While he was telling his first version the greater part was overheard and confirmed by an old lama who made a speciality of making prayer-flags and by Mrs. Datoop; but they arrived after he had started and did not, I think, realise that Kurma was connecting the story of this ordeal with his own family; the story itself is one which is told very often.*)

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Death of Banyok. Kurma's second version.

Banyok died about [illegible]. Kurma's only memory of him is his being carried by his elder brother, Ahyok, when he was almost all skin and bone. The swearing ceremony was done about a year later and he, Kurma, didn't see it but only heard about it; the death of his brother was not the precipitating cause though he seems to think it was involved in it. The poisoner, Tangdong, lived in Lingthem at a place a little below the monastery where there are orange trees today.

Kurma's mother's second marriage.

Some time round about 1910 the Mandal and his wife (*first wife, now dead*) arranged a marriage between Kurma's mother and a lama, Chenyak. This man had already been married once, having inherited his elder brother's wife. Thus it occurred that both his wives had been beyond the age of child-bearing. The Mandal advised him to marry Kurma's mother and the Mandal's wife performed the same office for the woman; whereupon the Mandal acted as *bek-bu* for the *asék* which consisted of a pig, a hen, a ceremonial scarf and a rupee; which were divided among the villagers of Panung where Kurma's mother lived, as she had no surviving family in the neighbourhood. There had been a man, the son of Kurma's father's elder brother, who should theoretically have married her as *oong-op* but the man did not fancy taking on the responsibility of a large family of infants, and since they lived under different Mandals there was no method of coercing him.

After Kurma's mother and Chenyak were married they first lived at Lingthem and then at the demand of the people of Liklyang —the small village across the river—who wished for their services as Mun and lama they transferred to that place. First of all the husband and wife went across the river and cleared the ground and built a hut; then they fetched to live with them Ahyok, Ajeunmu, who was married shortly after, and Samboop. This occurred when Kurma was about fifteen. Ajeunmu was married to a man living farther up the river who three years after the marriage developed leprosy, of which disease he and the other seven people in the house subsequently died. This is the last recorded case of leprosy in the neighbourhood. Her son Takshyom who is now nineteen years old, is living with Kurma as he has no other living relations. It is said of him that he is a bastard by an unknown father, but this is

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

159 Pargeut's mother is the Umzet of the Inebus. A shrivelled-
[164] up old woman, she was chiefly remarkable for a huge pendulous goitre, which flapped from her neck like a half-deflated bladder. She seldom attended the services, but used occasionally to bring her granddaughter, whom we were
[753] treating for boils. These she said were caused by a demon which was sitting on top of one of the marriage gifts when it was brought to the house. Although many ceremonies had been performed the boils remained, and even increased in number, and the aged Inebu could never understand why they started to disappear as soon as Geoffrey commenced to treat them. I remember once, shortly before we left, being suddenly awakened at dawn by the wailing of conch-shells, sounded from the terrace outside. It was a pouring
[763] wet morning; but she had clambered sorrowfully up through the dripping forest to have the death of her youngest granddaughter, a baby of two, announced to the village. I never saw her again.

* * * * *

Old Hlatam, the mother of Aga, has never advanced beyond the lowest rank of Inebu. But she was a regular
[788] attendant at the monastery and an inveterate turner of prayer-wheels, being seldom seen without one in her hand.
159 She has the reputation of being a poisoner; but it had never
● 754 occurred to the others that this was a somewhat strange occupation for a female religious. She is believed to have caused the death of six people up to date, as a result of which she is much feared by most of the villagers, who take care not to eat or drink at her hands. It is thought that she keeps the poison in a small copper box, and that she obtained it from the plains. Incidentally, when the people
[133] here talk of the plains they generally mean Darjeeling, which, although 6000 feet above the sea, and exceedingly hilly, compared with Lingtem might almost be regarded as level. It is said that owners of poison must abstain permanently from meat and alcohol; so be warned, reader,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

next time you find yourself dining with a vegetarian teetotaller! When anyone inherits poison it cannot be thrown away or its special guardian, the demon Sung-Mu-Panden-Hla-Mo, would revenge itself on the person who did this. Also if the holder of poison can find no use for it within a reasonable time it should be used to kill off one's own relations: to this there is no moral objection. Karma Karbari, who gave me this information, believes that his wife was poisoned by Hlatam, for once she drank *chi* at her house; and died three months later. She commenced by spitting blood. This passed and was followed by dysentery: hæmorrhages followed, and finally her teeth turned black and cracked. This was soon followed by death. Once a very old and learned Lama came to the village on pilgrimage, and on seeing Hlatam he at once told her to get away from him, as he could see that she was evil. Hlatam does not kill people deliberately; but because she owns poison she cannot help herself, and is in the power of its demon. Before she dies she will hand it over to her son, when he too will then be forced to use it. At one time people were so afraid of this old woman that she was driven out of the village by Tafoor's father, when he was Mukhtiyar of the district. It was believed that she always carried the poison on her person, and for this reason he followed her to the fields and completely stripped her; but he did not find anything. It was shortly after this that she decided to join the Church. Tafoor says that he does not entirely believe the story, but, all the same, if he is ever called to Hlatam's house he will certainly hold her responsible for any subsequent illness, and will take his revenge accordingly. The Mandal, too, confirms the story and says that he was present when Tafoor's father searched her. He does not, however, believe that she really does own poison, and thinks it wrong that the poor old woman should be so maligned.

* * * * *

While we were talking of Hlatam, Karma suddenly

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 7

Exorcism and Other Magical Practices

754 IN the wild and mountainous forests of Sikkim "it is fitting," writes Mme. David-Neel, "that sorcery should hold sway. The so-called Buddhist population is practically Shamanist and a large number of mediums: Bönpos, Pawos, Bunting and Yabas of both sexes, even in the smallest hamlets, transmit the messages of gods, demons and the dead."

I have already made a number of scattered references to these people, and shall now try to disentangle the extremely muddled and conflicting Lepcha ideas concerning them.

756 In the first place, it seems clear that prior to the advent of Lamaism in Sikkim the only recourse the Lepchas had to their demons and gods was through the medium of *Mun* and *Padim*. According to the dictionary the former word means a "vagrant singing priest"; it can also be used to denote "an exorciser; or any experienced person." Padim, on the other hand, is given as "one unacquainted with religion and exorcism; or belonging to the laity"; but this meaning was not known in Lingtem. The difference between the two is not at all clear, nor are their powers strictly defined; but whereas both men and women may become Mun, it is impossible for a woman to be a Padim. The position seems to have some points in common with the Shamanism of Siberia; for whereas the Padim's god is male, that of the Mun is female. A Padim has power over certain demons only; but a Mun has power over all. From time to time a Mun becomes "possessed"; but a Padim never. A Padim receives no instruction in his duties; and such esoteric knowledge as he

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

751 If she lives until after November she will in
755 future be lucky, especially should she engage in any form of
[177] trade. She will always have plenty to eat and drink and her later life will be "like a flower." It is clear, however, that some childless woman is covetous of her mother. At the present time she is listless; always in a hurry, and seems perhaps to pay no attention to her parents. This is because a demon has taken charge of her soul.

It is possible that the child may dream of corpses: also she may excrete and vomit blood, in which case she may have no desire for food. This, however, will be averted provided the treatment is carefully followed. The child will in any case suffer from coughs and colds during the next few months; but for this nothing can be done. They will not be dangerous.

793 Tafoor's fee for the consultation, at which the patient was
[146] not present, amounted to two rupees. The ceremonies, however, were much more expensive, but had not been completed by the time I left Lingtem.

793 We have already seen that in Sikkim the Lama functions
● 754 both as priest and doctor; but there is another side to his activities which may definitely be classified as magic or sorcery. This part of his work may best be considered under three separate headings: the causing of death, and sending of devils to cause harm; love magic; and finally, charms and spells.

754 The ability to cause the death of others is not apparently confined to Lamas and is occasionally carried out by laymen. The outward and visible sign of the ceremony consists in burning butter and incense over which copper has been scraped. A chicken must also be sacrificed and its blood offered to the demons. It is believed that by this means the selected demon gets a full stomach and will then do what is asked of it. It seemed so easy and simple a rite that I asked Tafoor if I could not do it myself; but "No," he said; "you have not been long in this country and the Mungs do not yet know who you are!"

Tafoor says that he has personally never sent a demon to

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754 trouble others, although of course he knows how to do it. The second Dorje Lopön, however, has often sent them; and by this means has actually caused the death of two people. On the first occasion he was still a pupil when a man came to his master and begged him to use his power to kill a certain person. The teacher thought it a good opportunity to see how his pupil progressed; he told him to have a shot at it, and see what happened. He did so; and in due course the man died. On the second occasion the Dorje Lopön had his knife stolen during some ceremony at the Monastery. He was very angry, but did not know who was the culprit. However, he sent a Mung to kill him; and when a man died shortly afterwards it was naturally believed that he was the thief.

Tafoor has himself learnt how to kill people; but "The State," so he says, "no longer permits the sending of devils for the purpose of causing people's death!" At the present time, in addition to himself, the two Dorje Lopöns are the only people in Lingtem who have the necessary skill. It is said that the first is still willing to exercise his powers on the quiet; but the second Dorje Lopön no longer does this [782] sort of thing: he went on a pilgrimage to Nepal some years ago and took an oath never in future to do it.

792 When a Lama is practising love magic on his own behalf 793 it is only necessary for him to take a rosary in his hand and concentrate on the girl whose love he covets, as a result of which she will be unable to resist his advances. Should his power of concentration, however, be insufficient to produce the desired result, he has only to take a small stone or a lump of dirt, spit upon it and throw it at the girl. This is never known to fail.

When acting on behalf of others the Lama must be given a small piece of hair of each of the man and woman concerned. He twines these two pieces together and then concentrates on the couple, the hair being thrown away later without ceremony. This service costs one rupee; but a friendly Lama will often do it for nothing.

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nor the big flat round Shaman-drum (rnga). For the sacrifice they do not use either the magic dagger (phur-bu) or the thunderbolt (rdo-rje), nor conch trumpets (dung), nor flutes made from human thigh bones (rkang-gling), nor the trident, nor the cup of the human skull (thod-pa). All the above mentioned articles are however indispensable to the Tibetan magicians, the Inner Asiatic and the Siberian Shamans. It is therefore evident, that the Mun and the Bong-thing cannot be identical with the Tibetan Bon-po as some scholars state. They belong rather to that primitive priest class, which has not been influenced by the typical Shamanism which operated in Tibet and spread from there to some Himalayan districts, to Inner and East Asia. The Mun and the Bong-thing are not allowed to practise any black magic as such. This is attributed to them by the neighbouring people, who consequently fear them greatly. During our investigations on this subject we repeatedly heard it said, "Only a wicked and demoralised Mun and Bong-thing would use his powers to harm another person, for their vocation is precisely to help people and to warn off all harm." The Mun wears no prayer cord. When he has to make a prophecy, he calls to his spirit, who comes on to his shoulder and speaks through his mouth. The Bong-thing has a prayer string, which he uses when prophesying. This string however, differs from the Tibetan one and has no definite number of beads.

In the white magic practised by the Lepchas we found many parallels with the ancient Chinese white magic, which had not as yet been influenced by the typical Inner Asiatic Shamanism. There is something in common to both in the matter of casting out demons. The magician compels the demon to enter into a pot of blood. Once the demon is in, he closes the pot and buries it.[87] Their dances have certain characteristics in common with the Wu,—the ancient Chinese magicians. In everything we find the content of the ancient class of magic which was widely spread and which preceded the Inner Asiatic Shamanism. There it received later the typical shaping which today, under the name of Shamanism

87. cfr. Dictionary of the Lepcha Language, op. cit. p. 294 a.b.

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793 wrongly includes all similar phenomena. The Mun and the
789 Bong-thing bear the closest resemblance to the Barwas of the
171 Bhils, the Pariar or Parihar of the Korkus (Central India), the Mantravadis of the Parayans and Pulayans (South India), and the Mantravadis of many other primitive tribes of India. We find here a very old class of magicians who have maintained their primitive tradition, and have well established rites and rules.

793 Next in importance to the Mun and the Bong-thing,
[776] the male Pau and the female Andshemu or Nandshemu are to be found among the Lepchas. Both these are said to be Tibetan spirits and are not empowered to perform the great sacrifices. They need the equipment of the Tibetan Shaman :
[778] —thunderbolts, skull-drums, etc. Tibetan influence is clearly evinced in all details. It may be noted that a Mun can also be an Andshemu, *e.g.* Han-bu-ni whom we have mentioned on more than one occasion. When she came forth as an
[781] Andshemu she spoke Tibetan in the trance and employed the Tibetan articles in the performance of the ceremonies. A Bong-thing can at the same time be a Pau, and he uses the Tibetan articles when he presents himself as a Pau. Some investigators have failed to observe this difference, and have in consequence erroneously declared the Mun and the Bong-thing to be identical with the Tibetan Bon-po. Gorer failed to perceive this important distinction, and hence there occur in his work, statements which are contradictory to the observations we have made. He states, for example, that the Mun are only female. We have taken great pains to verify that there are both male and female Mun. He calls the Bong-thing "Padem," who was supposed to represent a Tibetan spirit.
[777] This, however, indicates the extent to which Tibetan influence has extended in the area, particularly as the district in which Gorer carried out his research lay further north, to the Tibetan frontier. Gorer considers the Bong-thing to be weaker than the Mun, which again is not true in the districts in which we carried out our research. He draws a distinction between two kinds of Mun ; the good Tang-li Mun, the white magician, and the bad Mun-mook Mun, the black magician. Gorer
[764] however admits that whether one belongs to one type or to the other, depends upon the teacher from whom the instruction

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is received. If the teacher is a black magician, he teaches the black arts. It therefore has nothing to do with the Mun spirit who would be from the very beginning an evil being. This entirely contradicts the ancient tradition of the Mun and the Bong-thing who were established as mediators between God and men and as the protectors of men against the machinations of the demons. To this date the Mun and the Bong-thing have preserved these old traditions.[58]

The spirits of the Mun and the Bong-thing do not always live in their mediums, but they stay in a place called Tiamtan, as we learned above. They come down from there only when they are summoned. They take complete possession of their mediums only two or three times each year, particularly at the time of the festivals of the great sacrifices. At other times the mediums do not fall into a total trance. As we did not have the opportunity of observing such a trance personally, we repeat the description as given by Gorer, "When they come down, the vessel which receives them feels as though bowed down by a heavy weight.

The Moon only takes possession of this vessel twice a year, once in the hot season, and once in the wet season. This is a big ceremony and elaborate sacrifices are made. The day before the sacrifices I start feeling ill; I feel heavy and pressed down and cannot bear any noise. I tremble constantly and I am covered with sweat. I pray to the gods to let me off, and I offer the chi and incense in preparation for them to wait for the true sacrifices. The next day the ceremony is held inside a house and many people are present. I sit down cross-legged in front of the offerings. Besides the ordinary offerings there is a wreath of flowers and a flower bedecked stick. When I sit opposite these I feel a heavy burden pressed over my shoulders and as if my flesh is being poked with sticks—zinga-zinga-zinga-zinga; suddenly a sort of darkness comes over my eyes, it is as if I was in a sort of dream so that I know, see and remember nothing. But from what other people have told me and from what I have seen when other Mun have prophesied I know what takes place; I put on the flower necklace and take up the stick and go and

58. Cfr. Gorer, op. cit. p. 230 sq.